Journal of the Short Story in English
Les Cahiers de la nouvelle

44 | Spring 2005
Henry Roth's short fiction

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Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/428
ISSN: 1969-6108

Publisher
Presses universitaires d'Angers

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 March 2005
Number of pages: 49-63
ISSN: 0294-04442

Electronic reference
Virginia Ricard, « Against Oblivion: Henry Roth's "The Surveyor" », *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 44 | Spring 2005, Online since 05 August 2008, connection on 30 April 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/428

Against Oblivion: Henry Roth's "The Surveyor"

Virginia Ricard

1 "The Surveyor" was written in Spain during the winter of 1965-1966 and was first published in *The New Yorker* in August 1966.[1] It is the story of a wreath, a wreath that two American tourists, Mary and Aaron Stigman, attempt to lay at a forgotten historical site in Seville, and which is itself finally forgotten in a café.

2 To Mario Materassi, his Italian translator and friend, Henry Roth wrote with enthusiasm in January 1966: "I'm in the midst of a story I should like to show you... It's the first deliberately objective one I've done in about twenty years, deliberately concocted." A few weeks later, in another letter to Materassi, Roth mentioned the story again: "something really concocted—totally fiction." In July he wrote: "the story we concocted in Spain is due in print the sixth [of] August."[2] To concoct, according to the O.E.D., is to "make up of mixed ingredients (soup, drink; story, plot)." Repeated self-deprecatingly in these letters, the word appears to be used by Roth as a synonym for both 'objective' and 'fiction.' Since Roth at the time had been keeping a journal and writing long descriptive letters to friends and family in the United States, we can only suppose that he is opposing "concocted" to a more autobiographical account. The story, Roth seems to insist, is invented, or at the very least, stitched together from miscellaneous bits. However, although his description of "The Surveyor" as "deliberately objective" and "totally fiction" may leave some readers sceptical, it is undeniably a carefully elaborated and complex composition.[3] The following analyses some of the ingredients.

3 In "The Surveyor," Aaron and Mary Stigman manage, with the help of rented surveying instruments, to find the exact site on which Jews condemned by the Inquisition were burnt at the stake.[4] Their activity attracts the attention of bystanders and they depart in a taxi just as a policeman arrives on the scene. Later they return with a wreath which they lay in the middle of a flower bed on a spot which they had marked earlier in the morning. The same policeman reappears and questions Aaron, who answers that the surveying is just a "private matter." The policeman then escorts the couple — Aaron with

the wreath in hand once again — to a police station where they are questioned until a state attorney tells the inspector that there is no need to detain them. The attorney offers to accompany the Stigmans to their hotel. In a café, where the three drink brandy and talk, Miguel Ortega, the attorney, tells the Stigmans that he knows what they were looking for simply because he is himself the descendent of Marranos.[5] Aaron and Mary then find their way back to the hotel.

4 "The Surveyor" has a strikingly dramatic form which is perhaps a residue of Roth's earlier intention to write a play about a Marrano, the Inquisition and the conquistadores. Roth's correspondence shows how the idea of a novel became the idea of a play. In January 1965, he wrote to Mario Materassi: "I have been seized by a truly—to me—gigantic idea, a stunning novelistic idea that has literally seized me."[6] In July the same year he wrote that he had "dreams, cucoo [sic] dreams of writing another 'great' novel. (I'll keep dreaming that till I die.) And the locus of my present fiction, my present envisagings, is and has been for some time, Mexico and Spain. I see a wonderful connection between the Inquisition and the Conquistadores."[7] Then, in December 1965, Roth wrote again to Materassi: "But all this bears on what I've been dreaming about, on and off: The Inquisition, the Jew, Mexico. I think I've indicated at least as much to you before. Not a novel this time but a play."[8] A month later, at the end of January 1966, he had written twenty pages of "The Surveyor."[9]

5 Certainly, the idea of writing a play appears to have been an important element in the genesis of the story, one of the ingredients with which it was "concocted." Like a play in five acts, it is divided into five parts, clearly distinguished by a blank space on the page and by the descriptions of the specific settings which are, consecutively, early Sunday morning on the Avenida del Cid in Seville, late Sunday morning in the same place, a police station, a café, and the Barrio de Santa Cruz or old town. The descriptions in each of these scenes pay particular attention to layout as well as to significant objects; they could be read as if they were so many stage directions or instructions for the properties man on a set. At the police station, for example, we know exactly who is standing and who is sitting, whose portrait is on the wall (Franco's), and which maps, clocks and keys hang there (144). In the café we learn that there are espresso machines, barrels of wine and sherry, "ranks of colorful bottles on shelves," wrappers of sugar cubes on the floor, a small provision shop to the right of the bar, aging hams as well as "an assortment of sausages, equally aged," "basins of chick-peas visible on the small counter, lentils, rice, a large slab of brown quince jelly, and a crock of olives" (147). Clearly, the reader is meant to visualize these scenes. The descriptions of characters too are limited to outward observations of dress and posture, gestures and facial expressions. Aaron, for instance, is slight and middle-aged and has unruly grey hair. Mary is "also middle-aged, but taller and more slender than the man, with a gentle face and a high forehead" (137). She "seems more self-possessed than he" (137). The policeman, who appears later, is grey-clad, polite, stalwart, he has a large pink face which shows extreme perplexity and a scarlet-ribboned military cap, "His competence and good judgement were manifest" (142).

6 The reader then is very much an observer. Various strategies are at work here: the recurrence of verbs which draw attention to the visible as in the examples above (see, show, be manifest); the constant provision of the details we need in order to visualize the scene. In case anyone is not yet aware that this is a show, there is a *mise en abyme* with an audience actually inscribed in the text in the form of bystanders who watch Aaron and Mary's surveying activities and ask questions. Aaron, like an actor, has come prepared:

"He seemed to work as though he were doing something he was not thoroughly practiced at but something he had *rehearsed*" (136 emphasis added). Finally, "The Surveyor" seems almost designed for the theatre in that the essential information, the information which propels the plot forward, is to be found in the dialogue. Characters are revealed through speech and gesture. The story opens with Aaron and Mary in the midst of hasty and semi-furtive activity: the reader will learn only later what exactly they are doing. The dialogue between the as yet unnamed surveyor and his assistant consists at first mainly of instructions, but it reveals that these two are probably man and wife, that this is the excitable Aaron's idea, and that Mary is his not uncritical, "more self-possessed" amanuensis. When Aaron takes out his notebook, for example, he mutters "No, I don't need that now" (137). When he repeats information he has already given her, Mary says, "Don't get rattled, Aaron" (139). So, although "The Surveyor" is a short story, there is the perceptible presence of a legacy, an atavistic resemblance to its ancestor in Roth's imagination, the play he had once intended to write.[10]

7 The second important ingredient is the language of the story. It will surprise no reader of Henry Roth that language should be foregrounded in a number of ways. The attention to cadence, the frequent use of alliteration ("on both sides of the surveyor and his assistant stretched a low stone wall that fronted a deep, wide, waterless moat, overgrown with grass, which ran parallel to the façade of the Fabrica de Tabaco behind them" [137]), the alternation of long and short sentences, all enhance the almost palpable rhythm of the prose so that the reader *hears* the words on the page.

8 A more obvious foregrounding device is the use in the story of both Spanish and the professional language of surveying, an instance of what Mikhail Bakhtin termed heteroglossia.[11] From the very first line, the reader is faced with a barrage of mostly unfamiliar vocabulary describing the paraphernalia of the surveyor who apparently requires a transit, a plumb bob, a telescoped levelling rod, a tape, a protractor, a vernier, a tripod, screws which need levelling, and a notepad with numbers. The dialogue too is seeded with technical terms: "'OK. Now hold it up so I can *sight* it'" (137) or "'you cross. I'll *compute* the angle'" (138 emphasis added). Later, Aaron says "'I could have *triangulated* it to be absolutely certain'" (141 emphasis added). The cumulative effect is one of defamiliarization. The reader's awareness is heightened by the strangeness of the language. We are, in a sense, disoriented by Aaron's attempt to orient himself; we lose our bearings as he tries to find his, simply because we are immersed in the details of measurements, precision, accuracy.

9 This is also true of the Spanish used throughout the story. At the beginning of "The Surveyor" *glorieta*, *paradas*, and *buenos días* are each repeated three or four times in the space of a page and a half. Roth does translate for the reader, however, using both gloss (for example the first occurrence of *glorieta* is followed by "or traffic circle" [137]) and contextualization (*paradas* appears in a sentence which makes its meaning clear: "There were one or two people waiting for buses at various *paradas* along the Avenida" [138]). Sometimes no effort at all is made to translate (as with *"buenos días"* which is neither translated nor explained). Roth's implied reader is apparently expected to be able to guess meanings. Most of the Spanish in the rest of the story is elementary.[12]

10 Another device familiar to readers of *Call It Sleep* is the manner in which English is made to feel like a foreign language. In the conversations with the Spanish police officers, the reader experiences the dialogue as Spanish although it is written almost entirely in English. This is achieved in a number of ways. The policeman begins by addressing Aaron

and Mary in Spanish. This is rendered as *"'buenos días, señores'"* (142). Aaron answers the policeman's questions, "speaking in Spanish" we are told, although the conversation is transcribed in English. Further on, the reader is again reminded that this is Spanish, when Aaron "revert[s] to English" (143). Three other devices are used. First, there is a sprinkling of (unitalicized) Spanish words such as "Señor." Then, the formality of the language used by the policeman ("'what place is that, Señor?'" or "'Señor, surveying in public places among public establishments is no private matter. I could point out further that you laid a measuring tape...'" [142]) sounds distinctly foreign. Thirdly, the impression is reinforced by the translation into English of Spanish idioms. For example, the police inspector addresses himself to Aaron, saying "we are not at that pass, Señor" rather than, say, "it hasn't come to that yet" (145).

11 The presence of so many technical terms and so much Spanish in "The Surveyor" is all the more striking when the story is placed next to "The Wrong Place," Roth's non-fictional account of his stay in Seville, in which there are almost no technical terms and there is very little Spanish.[13] Apart from immersing the reader in a foreign world, the inclusion of Spanish in the story can also be seen as an economical manner of evoking Spain, as if a few words in Spanish, or the syntax and diction of a Spanish policeman could stand for the whole of Spain, or could make the reader feel the radical strangeness of its culture and history. Polylingualism in "The Surveyor" appears then to have a mimetic function in the sense that it seeks to imitate the reality of a multilingual and multicultural world, a world in which American tourists, busy at surveying, visit Spain and are confronted with its long and complex history. The repeated use of Spanish place names (Fabrica de Tabacos, Glorieta de San Diego etc.) and the names of historical events and Spanish heroes (Don Juan de Austria, El Cid Campeador) adds to the reader's sense of being plunged into Spain's past.

12 This leads to a third and the most important aspect of Roth's story: the question of the past – more specifically the Jewish past – and its survival in the present. Aaron Stigman, like Kafka's surveyor, is not merely taking measurements, but in a sense taking stock, and the past, too, belongs to the world he wishes to understand.[14] In a town like Seville, there are traces of history everywhere: in the place names and monuments, of course (Avenida del Cid, the monument to Columbus, etc.), but also in the architecture with its observable strata belonging to different epochs. The city is a sort of palimpsest containing hidden layers of history: the University was once a Tobacco factory, and the sixteenth century Catholic weathervane is supported by a twelfth century Moorish minaret. More obviously, past and present mingle in the city streets. Noisy traffic rumbles along "the ancient walls of the Alcazar deploying its series of pyramidal caps" (144). The modern city (this is the sixties) — with its radial cranes, its new arteries (where scooters and motorcycles race past bicycles and horse-drawn cabs) and its tall buildings under construction — lies next to the old. In "The Wrong Place," Roth describes the way a visit to a third-century amphitheatre in the outskirts of Seville affects his imagination:

> Dens are still fairly intact, and a few arches are still standing; the portals are discernible where the fans rushed in. You are they and they are you, and someone else will mark the lizard on the wall that you mark, and someone else has. For a moment you extend both ways, like the waist of an hourglass (243).

13 This coexistence of past and present is a complex system, "a maze" says Aaron at the end of the story, referring to the Barrio but also, implicitly, to the whole of Seville, to all of Spain and its labyrinthine history. There is an apparent order, however, a form of harmony even, in this juxtaposition of the old and the new. The ubiquitous Church

appears to be the mortar which holds the various fragments together. "The Surveyor" is threaded with allusions to Catholicism: the story takes place on a Sunday morning as people come and go to church, two monks are among the passers-by, and even the radial crane is "like a red, ungainly cross" (138). Mary (in spite of her name) thinks there are "too many cathedrals, too many *retablos*, stained-glass windows, saints, crucifixes, Virgins — Virgins!" (140) Even the secular monuments such as the statue of El Cid are freighted with memories of religious victories: "Horse and rider were poised on a massive granite pedestal.... There was no mistaking what the bronze statue was meant to portray: Spain's martial valor and audacity, the prowess that had rewon the peninsula from the Moors and later subjugated a new world" (138). And all of this takes place in the shadow of *la Fe*, faith, the weathervane: "Faith stood on her high pinnacle above the Cathedral, pointing at every wind with her palm branch of triumph" (151). Pointing in every direction, the monolithic presence of victorious Catholicism appears, from its panoptic position, to control every possible perspective, watching — surveying — not only the past but also the future.[15]

14 Still, something is missing. Part of the past has been erased. The *quemadero*, the place where Marranos were burnt, is no longer on the map.[16] Miguel Ortega says "I have old maps on the wall of my study. They are not maps, no. They are views of Seville.... In two of these, there is a certain landmark of the city, outside the walls. Where El Cid now stands. Approximately" (148). Everyone but Ortega is evidently ignorant of the existence of the *quemadero*, although it is "part of the Spanish heritage," as he puts it. This absence of any palpable survival of the city's Jewish past grates on Aaron Stigman's sensibility, and even Mary objects: "even a Protestant mind like mine rebels at it.... It's just too much." To which Aaron answers, "Yes, too many martyrs of their faith. None for mine—or what used to be mine. Why shouldn't there be some acknowledgement?" (140) It will require a different kind of surveying to locate what the Church has attempted to obliterate.

15 As any historian knows, the past is made up of events which cannot all be retrieved, so remembering the entire past — even the entire Jewish past — is unthinkable. Commemoration demands radical selection and therefore radical simplification. Aaron (who is not a surveyor, but a retired science teacher) deliberately chooses to find out about a specific historical event ("I had a good deal of research to do" [149]) and then to place a wreath on the exact spot where it occurred. As he and Mary — still carrying their wreath — follow the policeman, all those who notice them can see they are "tourists bent on a commemorative act" (143). In this particular case, however, the event to be commemorated has long since been effaced from the onlookers' memories. This creates a difficulty since commemoration requires the presence of others, some sort of *public* recognition — the acknowledgement that a particular past event is meaningful for the present. This is what Aaron means by the question "Why shouldn't there be some acknowledgement?" (140). In his last book, *La Mémoire collective*, the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs showed that memory is never a private affair. It requires the presence of others, and can only occur within a social framework — is in fact *structured* by the social framework within which it occurs.[17]

16 In "The Surveyor" the boundaries between 'public' and 'private' are continually blurred. When Aaron draws a measuring tape across a main road in order to find the exact place on which to lay his wreath, he shows that commemoration can never be entirely private, although he says just the opposite: "It is a private matter." It is difficult not to agree with the policeman when he answers, "Señor, surveying in public places among public

establishments is no private matter" (142). Later, when the policeman complains that "there are too many private matters involved here" (143), he draws our attention to the contradiction in the story: the so-called *private* question of laying a wreath in a *public* place with the object of recalling a *public* event. The officer at the police station agrees that "surveying operations on a public thoroughfare" are not a private matter, although Aaron says twice that the wreath is something he does not "care to discuss" (145). It is only because Miguel Ortega has his own "personal reasons" (149) for remembering the *quemadero* that the Stigmans are allowed to leave without further fuss. Finally, the debate about what is private and what is public is also an ironic echo of an essential historical fact: with the Inquisition, all forms of Jewish public life came to an end in the Iberian peninsula. Marranos were spied upon in order to ascertain whether they wore their best clothes on a Saturday or whether they fasted during Yom Kippur. Their private lives, in other words, had become a public concern.

17 Aaron's wreath itself testifies to these unresolved tensions. True, it is only a small, ephemeral token, made of fern and boxwood, and hardly noticeable beside the "massive granite pedestal" next to which Aaron lays it: "A little tribute where it was due. It is scant enough, isn't it?" he says (141).[18] And, of course, its meaning is not entirely clear: "The gardener or somebody will find a wreath here and wonder why. He'll probably move it to El Cid," says Aaron with resignation (142). Furthermore, Aaron's agency is limited, as he admits when he adds, "there's nothing I can do about it. There's little one can do against oblivion anyway" (142). Nevertheless, Aaron has done something: "I have made my gesture, for whatever it was worth," he says. And this in itself surprises Ortega, who says to him, "You intrigue me enormously.... That any man would be so—I hesitate to use the word—so naïve" (148). Clearly, for Ortega, the wreath is a sign of American innocence.

18 In his encounter with Miguel Ortega, Aaron is surprised to discover a very different form of memory. During their conversation in the café, Ortega tells the Stigmans that his grandfather had told him that "his father, when he became very old, would light a candle on Friday nights—would do it as a matter of compulsion" (149). Ortega, in other words, is the bearer of a living memory transmitted from generation to generation — the memory which the Hebrew Bible repeatedly exhorts Jews to preserve, and which has been the very condition of the survival of Judaism.[19] Ortega is not, however, merely a passive receptacle of memory. He also has an interest in history. When Aaron asks him if he still lights a candle himself, Ortega shakes his head "as if disdaining the thought" and says "A candle in consciousness is enough, is it not?" (150) Knowledge, in other words, has replaced ritual, which is why Ortega understands what business Mary and Aaron are about. His stance is that of the antiquarian, the collector perhaps. For him, the *quemadero* is a curiosity, a part — but not the whole — of his complex heritage. Even his physical appearance evinces complexity. He is out of place in his surroundings, "uncommon," both in height and in the way he holds his body. Those who died were "Spaniards who were also Jews," he says (150). Like the city of Seville, he contains several layers of identity, all of which appear to coexist in him in relative harmony.

19 Except for the tell-tale twitch. Miguel Ortega has a nervous tic to which there are no less than nine references — some of them slightly incongruous:

> ... his features seemed to wince (144) ... wincing and unwincing (146) ... his features became lighter (146) ... [his] face cleared (146)... his face unkinked (147) ... Ortega's face knit and darkened (148) ... the man's face, wrinkling and unwrinkling (148) ... Ortega's squint might have been a smile (149)... Ortega grimaced (149) ... for once his uncertain features seemed at rest (150)

20 We also learn that Ortega twitches "as if his face were too close to a hot fire" (144). In the light of what the reader learns later — that some of Ortega's own ancestors might well have been burnt at the stake — the proximity of a "hot fire" appears to be less metaphorical than it at first seems. Later, the "wincing and unwincing" make his face "belong at times to *two different individuals*" (146 emphasis added). Thus, the metaphor of the "hot fire" connects Ortega's nervous tic directly to the *quemadero* and the facial spasms clearly express the duality which was, of course, the principal attribute of Marranism. Marranos were not renegades in the sense that they did not abandon their faith through deliberate choice. Conversion was imposed from the outside, by the predominantly Catholic world which sought to impose unity and homogeneity; for 'new Christians' a new vision of the world did not entirely replace the old. Instead two visions, the Catholic and the Jewish, although often contradictory, penetrated the very heart of the individual. Miguel Ortega's appearance displays signs of this secret duality.[20]

21 The body then, is also a vector of memory. The reader is led to see Ortega's nervous tic as a symptom, and, like the compulsive movements of the hysterics studied by Freud, a sign of the existence of repressed memory.[21] It is surely significant that the symptom abates at the end of the conversation with Stigman, when Ortega refers to "the heroic constancy of Spaniards who were also Jews," and Aaron corrects him, saying "Jews who were also Spaniards!" After this, Ortega's "uncertain face" remains motionless, "for once," at rest (150). The simple fact of designating those who were burnt at the stake as Jews is apparently sufficient for the symptom to disappear momentarily. Whereas Aaron actively seeks the historical past, for Ortega, memory arrives unbidden. It comes to him as a legacy and reveals itself in the form of a twitch.

22 Ortega's agitation is all the more remarkable when compared with the tranquillity of the other Spaniards in the story. The first policeman is "stalwart" and "pink" and goes calmly about his job. The second police officer is seated and frog-like, while Ortega is standing. The patrons of the café in the Barrio are "Spaniards with placid faces" (148). Only Aaron resembles Ortega from this point of view: his "rashness" and haste are repeatedly compared to Mary's equanimity. It is as if the two Jewish characters express energy, although hidden energy in the case of Ortega. Aaron, with his wreath, naïvely — and perhaps clumsily — appears to want to make public what has, until the moment the two men meet, remained a private affair. His desire to commemorate the martyrdom of Spain's Jews creates a disturbance on an otherwise quiet Sunday morning.

23 Faith is the tutelary angel here. At the end of the story, it serves as a landmark and guide in the form of *la Fe* ("Yes, there it is. You found it... Now I know where the hotel is," says Stigman [151]). The word is present in all its major meanings. Represented by *la Fe,* faith means the one and only faith — Catholicism. It also means 'beliefs' as in "martyrs of their faith," or "I left the faith of my ancestors many years ago" (150) — and in these two instances, Judaism. But the emphasis shifts in the course of the story, and faith becomes instead a synonym for loyalty or constancy. This is the faith or rather faithfulness — the "heroic constancy in the hour of trial" (149) — which both Aaron Stigman and Miguel Ortega say they admire. In "The Surveyor," most things circulate and change (the *quemadero* becomes a statue of El Cid, Moorish monuments become Catholic). More importantly perhaps, no specific community has traits which are fixed forever: El Cid, the symbol of chivalry, has no monopoly of honour, as it is Aaron, the American Jew, who is concerned with behaving nobly: "Señor Inspector, what would you think of a person who was a guest in your house and insulted you—a guest who insults his host?" (145)[22] Neither

are languages owned by a single people (Mary, not Aaron, proposes the toast in Hebrew: "I think the word now should be *l'chaim*" [150]). Constancy is represented by Judaism alone, simply because Judaism lasts; it outlasts the Inquisition, and makes its way through history. Aaron learns from Ortega that it is even possible to remain faithful by being unfaithful. Marranism was, after all, not only a historic phenomenon which modified the history of a community. It was also a stance, a position adopted by the Jew in a hostile world as an answer to the problem of how to ensure the survival of Judaism. A stance designed to guarantee continuity in the guise of discontinuity. Aaron also learns that where there is faithfulness, commemoration becomes superfluous.[23] Which is why he forgets the wreath.

24 "There's little one can do against oblivion anyway," says Aaron (142). It is difficult not to hear Roth speaking in this statement, the Roth who was embarking on a new writing life, attempting to leave some lasting mark. But also, perhaps, the Roth who was trying to find a past and a place in history. Like Aaron, Roth was looking for a place — a recognizable place, a place in geography this time — which would signify, would represent his place in history. In the years which followed the publication of "The Surveyor," Roth made up his mind that that place was Israel, although he decided in the end not to settle there. In the winter of 1965-1966, he was still looking. And in the last line of the letter Roth wrote to Iven Hurlinger from Seville he says: "Evidently, I was still a Marrano, a latter-day one without the *shema*" (249).[24] Since Marranism implies the absence of all outward signs of belonging to any form of Jewish culture or heritage, one might ask what is left to a Marrano "without the *shema*." This is what "The Surveyor" sets out to explore, and it is a question which remains unanswered at the end of the story.

25 Roth may have accepted his status as a "latter-day" Marrano and the placelessness that he felt went with living in Diaspora, but he did not accept oblivion. Like Aaron, he made his gesture. In "The Surveyor" the wreath in the end proves to be too fragile, too ambiguous a token to be worthwhile. Only the story can fulfil the role Aaron has bestowed on it. "The Surveyor" then is not the story of a wreath forgotten in a café, but instead, it takes its place. In a sense it *is* the wreath, a tomb for those died on the *quemadero* and a tribute to those who remembered them.

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NOTES

1. Reprinted in *Shifting Landcape* (136-51). (Further page references are to this edition and are given in parentheses following the quotation.)

2. These letters, dated January 3 1966, January 31 1966 and July 25 1966 respectively, are all partially reproduced in *Shifting Landscape* (136). A copy of the third letter (July 25 1966) can be found in the Roth archives at the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), Series I, "Correspondence," Box 5, Folder 9.

3. The categories of 'total fiction' and 'objectivity,' like that of autobiography, are, of course, not always as clear-cut as Roth presents them. Writing is always a composition, a reorganization. Even autobiography, as Paul John Eakin observes in *Touching the World*, is "always a kind of fiction" (30).

4. In 1481, over a period of ten months, three hundred Jews were burnt at the stake in Seville.

5. 'Marrano' was the pejorative name given to recently converted Christians who continued to observe Jewish law and customs in secret.

6. Evidence (an article on Henry Roth was published in *Life* on January 8, 1965and Roth says in the letter that it is due imminently) shows that this letter to Materassi, dated "Jan. 4 '64," was in fact written in 1965 (AJHS, Series I, "Correspondence," Box 5, folder 11).

7. This letter to Materassi, dated "July 6 '65," is partly reproduced (and corrected —'locus' becoming 'loci' and punctuation added) in *Shifting Landscape* (134).

8. This letter to M. Materassi, dated "12-14-65," is partly reproduced (with corrected punctuation) in Shifting Landscape (135). In another letter, to Harold Ribalow, dated "Jan 31 '65" (AHJS, Series I, "Correspondence", Box 7, folder 4), Roth writes: "I plan on spending part of the summer, or parts of it investigating approaches to a project of my own--I think I mentioned it to you--a novelistic idea that has taken hold of me, to ascertain whether it kindles...".

9. "Have a short story myself, about twenty pages as I believe I told you...". See letter dated January 31 1966 and partly reproduced in Shifting Landscape (136).

10. As Thomas J. Ferraro pointed out in his essay "Oedipus in Brownsville," the "Prologue" of Call It Sleep was also staged, "suggesting Roth's immersion in the psychodrama of O'Neill" (97).

11. "All languages of heteroglossia whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms of conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values." Mikhaïl Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, 1981) 292, quoted by Hana Wirth-Nesher "Between Mother Tongue" (445).

12. Except perhaps for *agrimensor,* the Spanish for 'surveyor.' In *Shifting Landscape*, there is an added difficulty for the reader due to a misprint, the word being reproduced as "*A grimensor*."

13. "The Wrong Place" was published in 1978. It was based on a letter Henry Roth wrote to his friend Iven Hurlinger in October 1965 (and therefore *before* "The Surveyor"), although, in the published version, Roth modified the ending. The new ending is in keeping with the Roth's later analysis of his stay in Seville. At the end of "The Wrong Place" Roth asks "Why had I come to Spain? Ostensibly to familiarize myself with the background of my Marrano central character.

But that wasn't the reason I had come here. It was evident now, though all this while I had concealed it from myself. I had come to Spain *to reunite with Judaism*—via a side door!" (*Shifting Landscape* 247-48, emphasis added). The new ending clearly is a product of hindsight. As is the title: ten years after his trip to Spain, Roth felt he had gone to "the wrong place" — the "right" place, one can only suppose, being Israel. Both "The Wrong Place" and the ending of the letter to Iven Hurlinger have been reproduced in *Shifting Landscape* (238-250). Roth stuck to this vision of his stay in Seville. In 1985, he published "a segment of a journal kept during the Six-Day War" in *Rothiana: Henry Roth nella critica italiana*, which has also been reproduced in *Shifting Landscape* (172-174). As Roth begins in the past tense ("When the June '67 War broke out..."), it is difficult to believe that this was not written at a later date. In any case, Roth goes on to describe the novel he hoped to write "about a Marrano, a crypto-Jew who had managed to slip through the net of the Spanish Inquisition" and then adds: "Nor did I realize that in seeking to write that sort of book, I was all *unwittingly* groping toward a return to Judaism" (173 emphasis added). Copies of this letter can also be found at the AJHS, Series I, "Correspondence", Box 4, folder 2 and in Series III, "Manuscripts by Roth", Box 23, folder 5. There is also a copy of "The Wrong Place" in Series III, "Manuscripts by Roth," Box 38, folder 19.

14. In Kafka's last novel *The Castle,* K. arrives in a village claiming to be a surveyor, but no one seems to require his services, least of all anyone from the castle. K. spends most of his time in the village trying to understand the relationships between the villagers and the mysterious castle.

15. At the end of his letter to Iven Hurlinger, Roth describes his reaction to the omnipresence of the Church: "One suffers at length a kind of reaction to it all, to the overpowering religiosity that surrounds one—at any rate I did. I awoke Monday morning with a terrible feeling of despair. It seemed to me there was no escaping from the fearful conformity of Catholicism. It pervaded everything" (*Shifting Landscape* 248).

16. The *quemadero*was the place of execution built by the first inquisitors at Seville in 1481. It was not destroyed until 1809, when the material was used for fortifications during the French invasion of Andalusia.

17. *La Mémoire collective,* begun in 1925, was unfinished in 1944 when Halbwachs was deported by the Nazis. See in particular chapter I, "Mémoire collective et mémoire individuelle".

18. In "The Wrong Place," Roth mentions another modest commemoration of those history has forgotten: "in an obscure corner next to one of the Cathedral entrances there is a small marble headstone, and if I have made out the inscription aright, it says three *peones* lie buried here, three hodcarriers who lost their lives in the construction of the sacred edifice. I do them reverence" (242).

19. In *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory,* Yosef Yerushalmi reminds us that the verb *zakhor* — to remember — is used 169 times in the Hebrew Bible (5). He shows that ritual and liturgy were the essential mechanisms through which memory — although incomplete — was preserved in the post-Talmudic period (and not only after the expulsion from Spain). See in particular his comments on the Seder and the way in which observance stokes the Jewish collective memory.

In "The Wrong Place", Roth, who is attempting to see what it would have felt like to be a Marrano, remarks on the effect certain gestures (in this case going through the motions of being a Christian) have on the mind. When he drops a coin into the slot to light up a chapel in the Cathedral he writes, "The act sets in motion a train of waves, a sort of alteration of frames of mind, of tentatively accepting and not quite rejecting... One thing I haven't done yet but intend to, and that is to cross myself before one of these fanes" (246).

20. In "The Wrong Place", Roth, describing himself pretending to be a Marrano youth, has this to say about the inner struggle of Marranos: "I am aware of myself in dispute: protest all you like that you're a Catholic or a Christian, my Marrano friend, consume pork ostentatiously, or the wafer; but unless, unless polarities are truly reversed and faith replaces, nay displaces faith... unless the change takes place within the soul almost allotropically..., so that you're alien to the

being you were, then you remain what you are, and the other man's beatitudes and epiphanies roll off you like surf off a rock" (245). In other words, except for those who were truly converted, Christian "beatitudes and epiphanies" were not effective. Thus the duality with which the Marrano had to live.

21. See in particular "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896) and "Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defence" (1896).

22. In "The Wrong Place," Roth, when he mentions the statue of El Cid, goes to the trouble of copying a line from *El Poema del Cid,* which he then translates and explains in a note. Here is Roth's note: "'In your hands are the chests, Messers Raquel and Vidas' (247). With these words (from *El Poema del Cid),* El Cid's 'expediter' tricks two Jewish moneylenders into lending El Cid a large sum of money, collateral for which is locked up in a couple of fancy chests, *arcas*. Instead of the fine gold the chests were alleged to contain, they contain sand." Clearly, Roth is keen to show that the famously chivalrous El Cid was capable of dishonourable behaviour.

23. According to Pierre Nora, "il y a des lieux de mémoire, parce qu'il n'y a plus de milieux de mémoire" (Nora xvii). In other words, it is only when there is discontinuity, only when there is a rift, "du sentiment de la mémoire déchirée", that we become interested in commemoration, in *lieux de mémoire*. "Habiterions-nous encore notre mémoire, nous n'aurions pas besoin d'y consacrer des lieux", writes Nora (xix). Or, as Maurice Halbwachs put it in *La Mémoire Collective,*: "In general, history begins at the point where tradition ends, at the point where social memory vanishes or begins to disintegrate" (translation mine). "En général l'histoire ne commence qu'au point où finit la tradition, au moment où s'éteint ou se décompose la mémoire sociale" (130).

24. The *shema* or *sh'ma* is the prayer "Hear Israel, The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", Deuteronomy 6:4.

ABSTRACTS

Dans la nouvelle "The Surveyor", deux touristes américains séjournant à Séville, Aaron et Mary Stigman, cherchent à poser une couronne à l'endroit où se trouvait autrefois le bûcher sur lequel furent brûlés des Juifs condamnés par l'Inquisition. Le lieu ne figure sur aucun plan de la ville. Cet article examine d'abord le projet de pièce de théâtre qui se dessine à travers la nouvelle, puis l'effet de défamiliarisation produit par la langue de la nouvelle, en particulier l'emploi de l'espagnol et du lexique technique de l'arpentage. Enfin, il se concentre sur les figures de la mémoire et de la commémoration. Aaron, suivant peut-être l'injonction biblique invitant à se souvenir, voudrait ressusciter un événement presque oublié. Il rencontre le descendant d'un marrane pour lequel la mémoire prend une forme très différente et commence à s'interroger sur le sens de la foi, de la fidélité, de la connaissance et de la survie du judaïsme.

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